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THEY SAID IT

The fundamental error of socialism is anthropological in nature. Socialism considers the individual person simply as an element, a molecule within the social organism, so that the good of the individual is completely subordinated to the functioning of the socioeconomic mechanism. Socialism likewise maintains that the good of the individual can be realized without reference to his free choice, to the unique and exclusive responsibility which he exercises in the face of good or evil. Man is thus reduced to a series of social relationships, and the concept of the person as the autonomous subject of moral decision disappears, the very subject whose decisions build the social order.

Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 1991

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ISRAEL, OBAMA, AND “THE BIG LIE.”

For some decades now, the centerpiece of liberal piety has been the drive to improve the self-esteem of the world’s downtrodden.

It has been the focus of liberal education policy; that is, that no child may be allowed to fail, or to be told that he or she is wrong, or to lose in a competitive contest with other children.

It has been the focus of left-wing gender-relations policy. Girls, you see, must be told that they are equal to or superior to boys in every aspect of their lives, physical differences be damned. To do otherwise, to concede that boys are not girls and girls are not boys, is to sentence girls to lives of second-class citizenry, poor decision making, and overeating, we guess.

It is the central tenet of the left’s racial policies. It’s the showpiece of their foreign policy. It dominates their agenda, and fittingly so. It should shock no one that an ideology premised so heavily on the promotion of empty rhetoric should believe that words matter so extraordinarily. The modern left in all its varieties, from Lenin to Mao; from Wilson to Roosevelt; from Johnson to Obama is predicated on the idea that words, repeated often enough, eventually become reality.

This idea originated with the French philosopher of violence and revolution, Georges Sorel, who predicted in his 1906 book, *Reflexions Sur la Violence*, that the systematic creation of “social myths” would become *de rigueur* for socialists of the future. Max Eastman would later characterize these “myths” as “ideas not valid, but necessary to set the masses in motion.”

Thus, it becomes important not to tell students that they can fail. Or to tell girls that there may be biological differences between them and boys, which may affect their proclivities and aptitudes.

Or to tell subjugated third worlders that their problems might be of their own making, rather than the fault of Western imperialist exploiters.

At the same time, and for the very same reason, the inverse is also true. It is vitally important, at least to many on the left – those invested so heavily in the power of words and those who believe deeply in the sins of Western man – to repeat specific words over and over again; to claim, for example, that American foreign policy has heretofore been too heavily influenced by certain alien elements and by those who do said element's bidding, even to this nation's detriment.

The "Big Lie," you see, works both ways. And the unremitting repetition of the lie of "dual loyalty" and of callous words detailing Jewish "manipulation," were magically spun into truth. Or at least they were spun into the official policy of the United States.

For the better part of the last decade, the left has repeatedly and unremittingly insisted that anyone who disagreed with it about foreign policy, anyone who dared believe that the best way to fight the war on terror was "aggressively," anyone who favored taking the war to the enemy was somehow compromised.

The American left has always had a tenuous relationship with Israel, but had, up until 9/11, generally moderated its tone, for fear of alienating one of its most critical, dedicated, and assertive constituencies, namely American Jews. After the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, however, the mask fell and factions on the left began ranting openly about the alleged source of this nation's woes in the Middle East and, by extension, about the nefarious influence being exerted on American foreign policy by those whose "loyalties" were questionable.

As it turns out, the big, bad Israelis – who had defied leftist dogma, who had abandoned collectivism, and who had pulled themselves up from poverty to prosperity by embracing free enterprise and ingenuity – were the bad guys in the Middle East. And American support for them was the source of all the nation's woes. Support for Israel was not, the far left ranters insisted, in this nation's best interests. And thus it was maintained only through nefarious means and only to suit nefarious ends. The old prejudices were revived, only this time with the false patina of academic concern for the "oppressed" and the intellectual dishonesty that insisted that to curse "Israel" and "Zionism" was substantively different from the time-honored curse of the "damned Jews."

Before long, mainstream liberalism and the mainstream media were buzzing with discussion of and, more often than not, condemnation of the "neocons" who directed the Bush administration's foreign policy. Once upon a time, the term "neoconservative" had two meanings, neither of which had any place in the mainstream. One usage was academic and legitimately described a school of thought and a methodological approach to the study of history, philosophy, politics, and the nexus between the three; neoconservatism was a real and potent academic tradition, embraced by many significant figures in the study of American political philosophy and legitimately opposed and criticized by a great many others, many of whom were/are brilliant political philosophers and some of whom are friends of The Political Forum.

The second usage, by contrast, was short-hand for "Jews," and was employed by the unthinking know-nothings on the paleo-right and the Larouchie left. To these folks, the "neocons" were not real conservatives; they were converts. And they were not real Americans; they were Jews first, Americans second. American Jews couldn't be trusted, you see. And neocons were Jews, which is to say that when they advocated political positions and policy prescriptions, they worried first about Israel. "Dual loyalty" was the charge, and the bastardization of an intellectual tradition served as the cover for rank anti-Semitism.

Tragically, when the term “neocon” entered the mainstream, it did so far more along the lines of this second usage than the first. By the time the United States invaded Iraq, the left, in conjunction with the paleo-right, had decided that the “neocons” were to blame and the war was being fought more on behalf of Israel than the good ol’ U.S. of A. We detailed the rise of the new anti-Semitism just under four years ago, in July 2006, putting it thusly:

It’s sometimes easy to forget, now that the “anti-war” movement has been legitimized by various political and media factions, but the opposition to the war in Iraq and the broader war on terror has always had a significant anti-Semitic component. The foundations of the movement can be found in global Marxist/Stalinist groups like International ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) and the Workers World Party, which have long supported the radical Islamists in Hamas and Hezbollah in their struggle against the “Zionist” occupiers. The principal criticisms leveled by the left have always focused heavily on “dual loyalty,” subservience to Israeli ambitions, and, as Democratic Congressman Jim Moran put it more than three years ago, “the strong support of the Jewish community for this war with Iraq.” . . .

The blame for the war and its intellectual underpinnings has been assigned to “neoconservatives,” with particular opprobrium reserved for men with names like Pearle, Kristol, Feith, and, most notably, Wolfowitz, who, the columnist Mark Steyn noted last year, became “the most sinister of all the neocons . . . the man whose name started with a scary animal and ended Jewishly.”...

The anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan, who has become an icon of the movement, has long argued publicly that the Jews are the real sinister force at work in the war on terror. Sheehan has openly declared her belief that the war is the handiwork of a “destructive neocon cabal” and has accused this nation’s leaders of using American soldiers to do the bidding of the Israeli government and other Jewish conspirators. Last year she declared:

[M]y first born was murdered. Am I angry? Yes, he was killed for lies and for a PNAC [Project for the New American Century, a think tank chaired by The Weekly Standard’s Bill Kristol] Neo-Con agenda to benefit Israel. My son joined the army to protect America, not Israel. Am I stupid? No, I know full well that my son, my family, this nation and this world were betrayed by George Bush who was influenced by the neo-con PNAC agendas after 9/11.

Today, the anti-war left continues to believe firmly that the war in Iraq was somehow inspired by the dastardly Jews. Last week, for example, journalist/columnist Philip Weiss, who has become one of the loudest and most vocal critics of the “Israel lobby” and its nefarious influence on American politics, posted the following on his blog on *The New York Observer’s* web site:

9/11 was a gift to the Israel lobby: it could say, the U.S. and Israel are in the same boat. They said, Now you know how we feel. Indeed, I felt that way myself after 9/11; I thought, Now I know how the Israelis feel. But the lobby took that same-boatism too far . . .

Bush and Cheney and the neoconservatives then got us to climb all the way into the Israeli boat by deciding, with the help of Joe Lieberman, Hillary Clinton, Chuck Schumer, Howard [sic]

Waxman, Kenneth Pollack, David Brooks, and Thomas Friedman, to invade an Arab country, occupy it, and initiate a cycle of escalating violence that has reduced cities to charnel houses and sent the educated and affluent fleeing from Baghdad (and thoroughly Islamicized Iraq).

Soon after, John Mearsheimer and Steven Walt, foreign affairs academics at the University of Chicago and Harvard, respectively, published an article and, later, a book about the nefarious and overpowering influence of “the Jewish” lobby on American foreign policy. The book, fittingly enough entitled *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, was published in August 2007 and became a *New York Times* bestseller.

The authors argued that the Israel lobby (a euphemism for “Jews”) had become supremely powerful in Washington and had thereby damaged U.S. foreign policy and, unwittingly, the nation of Israel as well. The entire thesis of the article and book, but especially this latter argument – essentially the claim that those who oppose Israeli aggression are the *true* supporters of that nation, have its best interests at heart, and therefore cannot be anti-Semites – became the default position of the anti-war, anti-Bush factions of the Democratic party, which is to say of virtually the entirety of the party.

Is this to say that all or even most Democratic officials were or became anti-Semitic? Of course not. Indeed, most Jews in government are Democrats. And Jewish voters continue to pull the Democratic lever overwhelmingly.

It is, however, to say that true anti-Semitism is, in many ways, virtually indistinguishable from the worldview constructed by the left and embraced by the Democratic Party’s most prominent leaders. Israel, they believe, is a Western creation, an interloper in a land otherwise populated exclusively by the oppressed and the abused, the “victims” of the West’s imperialism and arrogance. To them, Israel is a manifestation of the West’s collective guilt and serves only to further oppress the Arab people in a vain attempt to assuage that guilt. The Jews are

the aggressors; the Palestinians are the subjugated. The Jews, simply by virtue of being Western, are automatically the oppressors, just as the Americans, by virtue of being Western, are automatically the oppressors, regardless of the circumstances.

And this brings us, at long last, to Barack Obama.

We really have no idea what Obama believes in the depths of his heart, despite the fact that he’s written two autobiographies. If we were to guess, we’d say that he is not anti-Semitic, in the traditional sense of the term. He is friendly to Jews, socializes with them, and trusts virtually the entirety of his presidency to one, Rahm Emanuel. It would be hard to imagine Obama (or anyone else for that matter) placing that much faith in the son of a member of the Irgun if he truly hated Jews.

At the same time, Obama is precisely the sort of preening, post-Western intellectual wannabe who is liable to buy the “Israel as oppressor” meme and to allow his *au courant* hatred for the West and for Western traditionalism to color his perception of Israel. The people whom Obama befriended in Chicago – from the Reverend Wright to the academic professional-Palestinian-grievance-monger Rashid Khalidi – are strong believers in Israel’s near-universal culpability. His foreign policy advisors are post-Western Arabists. His appointees have engaged in Israel-bashing. The guy is steeped in anti-Western, post-modern education and has surrounded himself with those who either are overt anti-Semites or do a pretty good imitation of them.

In other words, Barack Obama and his administration’s policy toward Israel are the inevitable outcome of the oft-repeated lies of the last decade. The left insisted that the Jews were pulling strings, that the “neocons” had dual loyalties, and that Israel was meddling in American affairs. And like the apocryphal schoolboy who is told so often that he is dumb that he comes to believe it, the most liberal administration in American history has heard so often about the Jews’ treachery that it too has come to believe it.

Throughout his presidency, Obama has treated Israel with disdain. But that contempt was taken to new heights over the last several weeks when the President used the excuse of a handful of new apartments in Jerusalem (to be built three years from now) as the pretext to lambaste Israel, to insult and humiliate its prime minister, and to shift American foreign policy radically away from support for Israel.

Much has been written over the last month or so about state of American-Israeli affairs and the Obama administration's anger and contempt toward Israel. But in our opinion, nothing is quite as revealing as the following, written by The Politico's Laura Rozen just over a week ago:

Since Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's tense visit to the White House last week, an intense debate inside the Obama administration about how to proceed with Netanyahu to advance the Middle East peace process has grown more heated, even as Israeli officials are expected to announce they have reached some sort of agreement with Washington as soon as tonight.

Sources say within the interagency process, White House Middle East strategist Dennis Ross is staking out a position that Washington needs to be sensitive to Netanyahu's domestic political constraints including over the issue of building in East Jerusalem in order to not raise new Arab demands, while other officials including some aligned with Middle East peace envoy George Mitchell are arguing Washington needs to hold firm in pressing Netanyahu for written commitments to avoid provocations that imperil Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and to preserve the Obama administration's credibility.

POLITICO spoke with several officials who confirmed the debate and its

intensity. Ross did not respond to a query, nor did a spokesman for George Mitchell.

"He [Ross] seems to be far more sensitive to Netanyahu's coalition politics than to U.S. interests," one U.S. official told POLITICO Saturday. "And he doesn't seem to understand that this has become bigger than Jerusalem but is rather about the credibility of this administration."

What some saw as the suggestion of dual loyalties shows how heated the debate has become.

Oh dear. The whole thing is troubling, of course. But did you catch that last bit? The bit about "dual loyalties" and the questioning of Dennis Ross's dedication to the team?

Note for the record that the man we are talking about here is Dennis Ross, who worked in the Arabist State Department of President George H.W. Bush and who served as the Clinton administration's special ambassador and chief peace negotiator. You remember that, right? You know, when Clinton, through Ross, convinced Ehud Barak to give the Palestinians everything they wanted, including an independent state? That's the guy we're talking about here.

Of course, Ross was raised without religion in the home, but his mother was Jewish. And that means that he's "one of them", dontcha know, a dirty, no good, dual loyalty totin' "neocoon" dedicated to promoting Israel over the United States.

After all the years, all the lies, all the repetition of scurrilous words, we're not surprised that someone in the Obama administration would suggest such a thing. But we are surprised that no one seems much to care and very few people – particularly in the mainstream media – seem to see where this is leading.

And where is it leading, you ask?

Unfortunately, we think it is leading to the selling-out of Israel and the acceptance of a nuclear-armed anti-Semitic, eschatologically fixated, lunatic regime in Iran.

Sanctions are dead. Obama seems completely disinterested in confronting the Mullahs and their henchmen. And, most importantly, the Jews and their Prime Minister have now been very nicely – if ham-handedly – set up by the current administration to be cut-off and scapegoated.

Why did Obama make such a big deal about such a stupid misunderstanding with Netanyahu? No one knows for sure. But if we had to guess, we'd say that he's intentionally pushing Israel away, if for no other reason than to make his acquiescence on Iran appear more reasonable. The threat of American condemnation also makes any attempt by the Israelis to handle the Iranian problem themselves a near impossibility.

In short, then: Obama gets relative and temporary quiet. Obama gets his way. Obama gets the praise and adulation of Europe and the Muslim world. The Iranians get the bomb. And the Jews get screwed. And the world becomes an even more dangerous place than it already is.

But then, what else is new? Tell the lie often enough, we guess, and anything is possible. Isn't that what we've been told?

We will close with a quote from our "Fearless Forecast" article published on January 11, 2010 entitled "2010: A Time To Experience Confused Leadership."

For eight years, we thought that the United States would use force if necessary to prevent [Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon], and that if it didn't, Israel would. We no longer believe this will happen. Why won't

it happen? We really don't know. As the late great Waylon Jennings put it in a tune written by Steve Gillette and Charles Quatro: "There are songs that birds don't sing to people. There are secrets that keep right through to the end."

As for Israel, it will eventually, if it hasn't already done so, resign itself to the fact that its only practical defense against the acquisition of nukes by the Iranians is the well known concept of Mutually Assured Destruction. And the term "hair trigger" doesn't even begin to describe the vigilance the Israelis will have to employ to feel safe under such circumstances.

THE BIG LIE, PART II.

Pope Benedict XVI almost certainly did not have a happy Easter. Indeed, as the headline of a Reuters wire story on the Pope and his holy day celebration noted, the Holy Father celebrated Easter "under a cloud." That cloud, of course, is the ongoing sexual abuse scandal in the Church, which has weighed heavily on Pope Benedict for years, both in his current role and in his previous one as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The scandal has weighed even more heavily on him during the past few weeks, as new revelations in Ireland and elsewhere have brought the scandal to the front pages once again and as the press in various countries has done its damndest to make this scandal about the Pope himself.

That the Pope and the Church are under attack is without question. In the last couple of weeks alone, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *BBC* – the holy trinity of the global liberal media – have run exposes and/or editorial comments on the sex scandal and on Pope Benedict's alleged role in it.

What is questionable, however, is the end game of the new inquest into the disgrace and, more to the point, the veracity of the allegations made specifically against

Pope Benedict. In short, the left-leaning media is hunting witches. And the question is whether it will find any.

The evidence gathered and arrayed against Pope Benedict would appear, at first blush to be quite damning. According to the media reports, not only did he intervene to stop the trial of a known molester – of deaf boys nonetheless – but he also wrote secret documents in his role as Prefect, documents purportedly designed to keep abuse victims from taking their stories public and even to intimidate them with the threat of excommunication.

If any part of these charges are proven to be true, then the Pope – the Bishop of Rome and the Vicar of Christ – would himself be an accomplice to sexual molestation, which would not only destroy him and his career, but would hold the potential to destroy the reputation of the Church herself.

Fortunately, it appears that the Pope's left-wing assailants have exaggerated their claims against him, and likely worse. Indeed, one might reasonably take that charge a step further, given that an honest reading of the evidence would suggest that some of the Pope's accusers may well have fabricated parts of their case in their righteous and overzealous pursuit of their quarry.

Let's take, for example, the case of the Father Lawrence Murphy, who is presumed to have sexually molested dozens, if not hundreds of boys in his nearly quarter century as the principal of St. John's School for the Deaf in Milwaukee. According to *The New York Times*, Pope Benedict – then Cardinal Ratzinger – intervened to stop the canonical trial of Father Murphy, thereby keeping his transgressions quiet and allowing him to die without punishment. If true, these are very serious and very damning charges against a man who has, up until now, been seen as a reformer and an ardent pursuer of criminal sex abusers in the Church.

Unfortunately for the *Times* and fortunately for the Church, the charges leveled against the Pope – by the paper and by the victims' lawyers – do not stand up to

scrutiny. Consider, if you will the following, penned by Father Thomas Brundage, who served as the Judicial Vicar for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee from 1995-2003 and in that role presided over the canonical criminal case against Fr. Murphy:

I will limit my comments, because of judicial oaths I have taken as a canon lawyer and as an ecclesiastical judge. However, since my name and comments in the matter of the Father Murphy case have been liberally and often inaccurately quoted in the *New York Times* and in more than 100 other newspapers and on-line periodicals, I feel a freedom to tell part of the story of Father Murphy's trial from ground zero.

As I have found that the reporting on this issue has been inaccurate and poor in terms of the facts, I am also writing out of a sense of duty to the truth. The fact that I presided over this trial and have never once been contacted by any news organization for comment speaks for itself . . .

With regard to the inaccurate reporting on behalf of the *New York Times*, the *Associated Press*, and those that utilized these resources, first of all, I was never contacted by any of these news agencies but they felt free to quote me. Almost all of my quotes are from a document that can be found online with the correspondence between the Holy See and the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. In an October 31, 1997 handwritten document, I am quoted as saying 'odds are that this situation may very well be the most horrendous, number wise, and especially because these are physically challenged, vulnerable people.' Also quoted is this: "Children were approached within the confessional where the question of circumcision began the solicitation."

The problem with these statements attributed to me is that they were handwritten. The documents were not written by me and do not resemble my handwriting. The syntax is similar to what I might have said but I have no idea who wrote these statements, yet I am credited as stating them. As a college freshman at the Marquette University School of Journalism, we were told to check, recheck, and triple check our quotes if necessary. I was never contacted by anyone on this document, written by an unknown source to me. Discerning truth takes time and it is apparent that the *New York Times*, the *Associated Press* and others did not take the time to get the facts correct . . .

[W]ith regard to the role of then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), in this matter, I have no reason to believe that he was involved at all. Placing this matter at his doorstep is a huge leap of logic and information . . .

[T]he competency to hear cases of sexual abuse of minors shifted from the Roman Rota to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith headed by Cardinal Ratzinger in 2001. Until that time, most appeal cases went to the Rota and it was our experience that cases could languish for years in this court. When the competency was changed to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in my observation as well as many of my canonical colleagues, sexual abuse cases were handled expeditiously, fairly, and with due regard to the rights of all the parties involved. I have no doubt that this was the work of then Cardinal Ratzinger.

Additionally, Father Raymond de Souza, the chaplain at Queen's University in Ontario noted a few other interesting facts about the *New York Times* hit piece on

the Pope, facts which neither the *Times* nor anyone else in the mainstream press apparently has much interest in sharing. To wit:

The New York Times story had two sources. First, lawyers who currently have a civil suit pending against the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. One of the lawyers, Jeffrey Anderson, also has cases in the United States Supreme Court pending against the Holy See. He has a direct financial interest in the matter being reported.

The second source was Archbishop Rembert Weakland, retired archbishop of Milwaukee. He is the most discredited and disgraced bishop in the United States, widely known for mishandling sexual-abuse cases during his tenure, and guilty of using \$450,000 of archdiocesan funds to pay hush money to a former homosexual lover who was blackmailing him. Archbishop Weakland had responsibility for the Father Murphy case between 1977 and 1998, when Father Murphy died. He has long been embittered that his maladministration of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee earned him the disfavor of Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, long before it was revealed that he had used parishioners' money to pay off his clandestine lover. He is *prima facie* not a reliable source . . .

The *New York Times* made available on its own website the supporting documentation for the story. In those documents, Cardinal Ratzinger himself does not take any of the decisions that allegedly frustrated the trial. Letters are addressed to him; responses come from his deputy. Even leaving that aside, though, the gravamen of the charge — that Cardinal Ratzinger's office impeded some investigation — is proven utterly false.

The documents show that the canonical trial or penal process against Father Murphy was never stopped by anyone. In fact, it was only

abandoned days before Father Murphy died. Cardinal Ratzinger never took a decision in the case, according to the documents. His deputy, Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, suggested, given that Father Murphy was in failing health and a canonical trial is a complicated matter, that more expeditious means be used to remove him from all ministry.

The other serious and apparently damning charge against the Pope – that he wrote a secret document encouraging Church cover-ups and threatening retaliation against victims – turns out, under scrutiny, to be just as risible, if not more so. Singer, activist, and lunatic Sinead O'Connor, who was granted op-ed space in *The Washington Post*, and her fellow lunatics at the *BBC*, allege breathlessly that the Pope himself led the cover-up of sex abuse, wrote a super-secret document detailing the means by which the cover-up should be conducted, and actually threatened victims. *The Evening Standard* summarizes the *BBC*'s charges thusly:

The Pope played a leading role in a systematic cover-up of child sex abuse by Roman Catholic priests, according to a shocking documentary to be screened by the BBC tonight.

In 2001, while he was a cardinal, he issued a secret Vatican edict to Catholic bishops all over the world, instructing them to put the Church's interests ahead of child safety.

The document recommended that rather than reporting sexual abuse to the relevant legal authorities, bishops should encourage the victim, witnesses and perpetrator not to talk about it. And, to keep victims quiet, it threatened that if they repeat the allegations they would be excommunicated.

The problem with this is that it is pure, fatuous garbage. Both then-Cardinal Ratzinger's letter (*De delictis gravioribus*) and the 1962 document it updated and

reinforced (*Crimen sollicitationis*) dealt specifically with the crime of sexual solicitation in the confessional (i.e. a priest using the confessional to solicit sexual acts from lay persons). Neither document was intended to offer a broad Church-wide policy on all crimes of sexual abuse, but merely the crime of solicitation alone. Moreover, neither document prevented victims from taking their charges to legal authorities nor even encouraged them to remain silent. Rather, both imposed silence upon Church officials, most notably the suspected priest who, as in all matters discussed in the Sacrament of Penance, retained an obligation to respect the confidentiality of the confessional. As the noted Catholic historian George Weigel and the Canon lawyer Father Jay Scott Newman recently put it:

Both the 1962 and 2001 Vatican instructions were intended to protect the privacy of victims and the integrity of the sacraments, and to enable the Church to take serious action against priests who committed the horrible crime of sexual solicitation during confession; no one has ever been threatened with excommunication for blowing the whistle on a clerical sexual predator; and the procedures put in place at CDF in the early part of this decade — like the transfer of these cases to CDF itself — were intended to strengthen the Church's capacity to deal with clerical sexual abuse, not cover it up. Moreover, the Vatican instructions of 1962 and 2001 were chiefly concerned with (mercifully rare) abuses of the Sacrament of Penance, not the sort of serial abuse of minors that has drawn our attention and disgust in recent years. To fault these documents for not solving a problem they were not written to address is to miss the serious effort made by the Church, largely under Ratzinger's leadership, to purge the priesthood of sexual predators.

These are facts. They can be verified by any competent canon lawyer. Why the *Washington Post* chose Palm Sunday, while Benedict XVI was celebrating one of the most beautiful liturgies of the year in St. Peter's Square, to publish an ignorant and malicious piece by Sinead O'Connor, whose contempt for the Church is well known, is not for us to judge. What we can say, as yet another fact, is that by doing so without any elementary fact-checking, the *Post's* editors have contributed to the further spread of a Big Lie.

But if the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *BBC* are involved in spreading what Weigel and Fr. Newman call "the Big Lie," the question remains why they would feel the need to do so.

The answer to this question, we think, comes in two parts. The first deals specifically with Pope Benedict, and a nice summary of this impulse can be found in the aforementioned summary of the BBC program published by *The Evening Standard*:

Before being elected as Pope Benedict XVI in April last year, the pontiff was Cardinal Thomas Ratzinger who had, for 24 years, been the head of the powerful Congregation of the Doctrine of The Faith, the department of the Roman Catholic Church charged with promoting Catholic teachings on morals and matters of faith. An arch-Conservative, he was regarded as the 'enforcer' of Pope John Paul II in cracking down on liberal challenges to traditional Catholic teachings.

We'd argue that this is an unfair and inaccurate portrayal of the Pope. But clearly, this is the mainstream view of him – a reactionary and "arch-Conservative." And as any schoolboy knows, it is the mainstream media's responsibility to save us all from reactionaries and arch-Conservatives.

Additionally, as we noted last October and in July of the previous year, Pope Benedict represents a very real threat to the more aggressively post-modern factions of the Anglican Church. The Pope has been quite aggressive in pursuing ecumenism with the Anglican Church and, last fall, even went so far as to establish Personal Ordinariates designed to foster the full communion of unhappy erstwhile Anglicans with the Catholic Church. As we put it in October, such efforts "will all but certainly increase the reach of the papacy worldwide and increase the vibrancy of the Catholic Church in Africa as well as throughout the Anglosphere, notably here in the good old U.S. of A."

The second part of the explanation for the recent stepped-up attacks on the Church has to do more broadly with the Church as a global entity and its role as bulwark against the expanding secular and nearly omnipotent state. We have argued for years that the Church – along with the committed, traditional evangelical churches – is, in many ways, the last, great hope for the West in its twilight struggles against apathy, nihilism, post-modern depravity and the encroachment of radical Islam. As it has for centuries, the left continues to despise the Church for this role and therefore seeks either its destruction or its "modernization," which would effectively destroy it.

The Church in this country has, of course, caused much consternation of late among the forces of the left for its role in the health care reform debate. Indeed, the only hope that the country had of avoiding "reform" rested with pro-Life and largely Catholic House Democrats who felt an obligation to heed their Bishop's pleas and consider defeating the bill because of its public funding of abortion. That these pro-Life Democrats turned out not to be as pro-Life as their bishops would have liked doesn't change the fact that they, in concert with the Catholic bishops, nearly derailed the health care bill and with it the Obama presidency. And for this, the Church must not be forgiven.

For literally millennia, the Church has stood in the way of those who promote socialism under the guise of egalitarianism and "liberty." For more than

century now, since the issuance of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII, the Church has explicitly directed its social and economic efforts at the defeat of socialism and all other ideologies that seek to subjugate the individual to the state. The ongoing sexual abuse scandal is serious enough, revolting enough, and prominent enough to threaten the Church's future ability to maintain that role. Why not then take the chance and attempt to push the advantage?

In her column last week, Peggy Noonan described the Church's problems as a "catastrophe." She is undoubtedly right about this. There is no question that the abuse and ongoing cover-ups have been catastrophic for the victims, for the Church, for its members, and for society as a whole. Noonan also argues that Catholics should be careful not to "blame" the media for this mess, since it is the media who actually forced the issue and compelled Church officials to confront their problems and reform those practices that contributed to this catastrophe. Again, she is right . . . but only to a point.

Certainly the media has played a critical role. And without the *Boston Globe* and a handful of other operations that forced the issue, the Church might still not have come to grips with its issues. But not all media are created equal. And not all exposes are equal, much less true. Over the last several weeks, some of the most prominent members of the mainstream press have engaged in what can only be described as a smear campaign against Pope Benedict XVI. The fact that many in the Church have both engaged in and facilitated vile and destructive acts doesn't not give the media license to fabricate a case against the one man most responsible for confronting those evils.

As the canonical judge Father Brundage put it, the sexual abuse scandal has been a tremendous "scourge" "not only for the Church but for society as well." Sadly, some appear eager to compound this scourge by spreading falsehoods that can only but further damage the church, and society as well.

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